

The Hunt Botanical Library is a specialized institution performing scholarly functions with both efficiency and taste. As our libraries become more and more crowded we will have to rely increasingly on specialized libraries, for much as we may hate to contemplate the notion, many libraries will not be able to house material as they have been accustomed to in the past. For this purpose, the Hunt Botanical Library serves as an admirable model. It deserves the full support of the botanical community and we should be grateful to its sponsors, director, and staff for their efforts.—JOHN H. THOMAS, Dudley Herbarium, Stanford University.

The Origin of Cultivated Plants. By FRANZ SCHWANITZ. pp. 175. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. 1966. \$4.75.

There is urgent need for a modern treatment of the origin of cultivated plants, patterned after De Candolle's classical work, "The origin of cultivated plants" published in 1886. In spite of the title, Schwanitz' little book of 175 pages evidently was never intended to fulfill this need. Indeed, the accumulated knowledge of the origin of cultivated plants is now so voluminous that it could not be compressed within the covers of a single volume of reasonable length. Furthermore, it is probably beyond the ability or capacity of one individual to treat the subject adequately.

Schwanitz' book was first published in 1955. The present version was translated from German by Gerd von Wahlert and published by Harvard University Press in 1966. Unfortunately, there is no indication that the opportunity for up-dating the text was used to advantage. As a result statements about corn, wheat and perhaps others do not reflect new and significant information about these crops.

The audience for which the book was prepared is not indicated, but it would be useful as supplemental reading for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in economic botany, origin of cultivated plants, and other courses of like nature. Scientists or laymen whose work is with cultivated crops should find much of interest in the text.

A large portion of the book is devoted to specific examples of the ways in which wild plants differ from their corresponding cultivated forms. This is the most interesting and useful part of the book. Also, the well-known story of the transition of lupine from an essentially wild plant to a cultivated one under the skillful guidance of the German plant breeders, von Sengbusch and his colleagues, is reviewed in detail. The concluding chapter is a good short sketch of some of the highlights in the history of plant breeding.

The unwary reader should be cautioned against some rather serious errors that have crept into the text, most likely as the result of faulty translation. For example on page 5, Correns, de Vries and Tschermak are credited with the "discovery" of the laws of heredity. Obviously it should have been "rediscovery." This error is partially corrected on page 161 (156 pages later) with the statement: "The 'rediscovery' of Mendel's laws of heredity around the turn of the century, etc." On page 7, it is stated that wild rice, *Zizania aquatica* "was one of the most important food-stuffs of North American Indians." True, it was an important food for a few tribes in northern Minnesota where conditions are suitable for its culture. But to imply its use was wide-spread among North American Indians is completely misleading.

I doubt that those familiar with the taxonomy and systematics of maize would agree with the statement on page 146, "Maize, *Zea mays* is closely related to millet." Since this is an undocumented assertion it is difficult to guess what millet the author or the translator had in mind. These are samples of the errors that could be corrected should the popularity of the book call for a reprinting or a new edition.

It is apparent that the translator is not at home with agricultural terms and practices. Unfamiliarity has led to a number of awkward statements and phrases, and several redundancies. Under Literature about 20 general works are cited, none more recent than 1955. An index of about 4¼ pages, with a few minor errors, completes the book.—THOMAS W. WHITAKER, United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, La Jolla, California.